
Impact Report 2024/25



July 2025

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Cover image: Cultarlann Inbhir Nis at the key handover ceremony at Inverness East Church, Scotland, which received an AHF grant in 2024/25. Credit - Cultarlann Inbhir Nis.

Executive Summary

Since 2023, the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) has been delivering a [Strategy](#) focused on three core aims: **Fund, Support, and Inspire**.

Figure 1: AHF strategic aims

FUND	SUPPORT	INSPIRE
Delivering targeted investment that leads to the sustainable reuse and management of historic buildings.	Supporting charities and social enterprises to take ownership of, develop and sustain new uses for historic buildings.	Championing the impact of heritage and community-led regeneration.

Two years into our Strategy, evidence suggests we are on track to achieve these aims.

Since April 2023, we have supported 275 distinct projects across the four nations.¹

Grants and Loans offered from April 2023-March 2025: 334

Total value of Grant and Loan offers from April 2023-March 2025: £7,565,035



*A school visit to Robert Burns Ellisland Museum & Farm, Scotland, which received an AHF loan in 2024/25.
Credit - Duncan Ireland and South of Scotland Destination Alliance.*

2024/25 Key Indicators

Aim 1: **FUND**

✓ *Delivered targeted investment leading to the sustainable reuse and management of historic buildings*

Figure 2: AHF Grant and Loan offers in 2024/25

	Grants	Loans	Total
Number	153	4*	157
Value	£1,734,699	£350,000	£2,084,699
Average value	£11,262	£87,500	

*These projects form part of our current loan portfolio comprising £10 million in loans to 47 projects.

- £29,070,144 in additional funding levered into heritage-regeneration projects through matches to AHF grants and loans;
- 43% of AHF awards to projects in the top 30% IMD areas (against a target of 50%);
- 1/3 of projects reported buildings coming into community ownership during their grant or loan thanks to AHF funding (rising to 50% five years after receiving funding); and
- 90 FTE jobs created through delivery of AHF projects, plus 1025 volunteers engaged.

Aim 2: **SUPPORT**

✓ *Supported charities and social enterprises to take ownership of, develop and sustain new uses for historic buildings*

- 77% of projects supported by AHF reported they gained new knowledge or skills related to delivering their project;
- 93% of projects reported AHF's funding and support had a Significantly or Considerably Positive impact on their confidence to lead their project;
- 99% of projects were Extremely or Very Likely to recommend the AHF's support to another heritage regeneration project;
- Nearly £7 million in grants and blended-finance awards secured for heritage-regeneration projects through AHF brokering and application support in the Energy Resilience, Thrive Together, and Community Ownership Fund programmes; and
- Community-hire spaces and arts and cultural uses were the most common end uses of historic buildings we support.

Aim 3: **INSPIRE**

✓ *Championed the impact of heritage and community-led regeneration*

- 38 conference presentations and panels participated in by AHF staff;
- 83 case studies and news stories published on our website and in newsletters;
- 119 mentions of the AHF in media; and
- £8,216,125 in funding secured for future grant programmes.

The future funding includes: £5,164,000 from DCMS to support the 2025/26 Heritage Revival Fund, a new town centre grants programme in England, plus an additional £250,000 from Historic England; £1,979,500 from Historic Environment Scotland for a three-year grants programme in Scotland, plus an additional £279,125 from the William Grant Foundation; £500,000 from Cadw for a 2025/26 Wales grants programme; and £43,500 from the Department for Communities in NI for a 2025/26 Northern Ireland grants programme.

You can read more about the Outcomes and Impacts of the AHF's work this past year in the report that follows.



A workshop run by Heart n Soul, a creative community and arts charity that works in partnership with Lewisham Arthouse at the Old Deptford Library, England, which received an AHF grant in 2024/25. Credit - Richard Phoenix.

AHF's Evaluation Framework

Last year's report shared the rationale for a new Evaluation Framework we were developing, and in September 2024, we provided a more detailed update on that [Framework](#). The data presented below uses the new framework and covers our activity from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

This data is gathered from a variety of sources, the methodology for which are described in the Framework update.

Our new framework measures our success against three (direct) Outcomes that our engagement has on a project and three (indirect) Impacts that these projects have within their communities. **Together, these Outcomes and Impacts demonstrate the difference we are making for heritage-regeneration projects and communities in the UK.**

Figure 3: Outcomes and Impacts

Outcome 1: Project leaders / community groups are more confident that they have the skills, knowledge and networks to lead and sustain their project	Impact 1: Heritage buildings are being invested in, leading to sustainable uses in places across the UK
Outcome 2: Projects are more financially resilient and sustainable, showing indicators of maturity	Impact 2: Heritage buildings are restored and providing critical social infrastructure in communities across the UK
Outcome 3: More resources available for community-led heritage regeneration	Impact 3: Places benefit from economic and civic regeneration



Camalough Heritage Society at St Jude's Church in Camalough, Northern Ireland, which received an AHF grant in 2024/25.

Outcome 1

Project leaders / community groups are more confident that they have the skills, knowledge and networks to lead and sustain their project

After decades of working with community-led organisations to conserve and adapt historic buildings and develop business models that will see them in resilient use, we know that project teams often require new skills to grow in confidence and succeed. For this reason, we ask all AHF projects at the end of their grant or loan period if they have gained new knowledge or skills related to their project, and whether they have become more confident in their ability to deliver.

Spotlight on Skills Development

During 2024/25, 111 respondents completed their grant or loan and filled out an Exit Survey. Of these:

- ⇒ 77% (86) reported that they or members of their team gained new knowledge or skills related to delivering their project through their grant or loan, and less than 4% (4) reported they gained no or only a little knowledge.
- ⇒ **93% reported that AHF's funding and guidance had a Considerable or Significantly Positive impact on their confidence to lead their project or its further development.**
- ⇒ No projects reported that AHF's involvement had zero or negative impact on their confidence.

In total, 99% of projects reported they were Extremely Likely (102) or Very Likely (8) to recommend the AHF's support to another community-led heritage regeneration project.



Llanelli Railway Goods Shed, Wales, which received an AHF grant in 2024/25. Credit - Llanelli Railway Goods Shed Trust.

Outcome 2

Projects are more financially resilient and sustainable, showing indicators of maturity

The most direct outcomes of AHF funding and support for projects is in helping them to move forward through the project lifecycle towards resilient long-term operation, and since much of our funding supports early-stage project development, the extent to which we have helped projects progress is among our most important indicators of impact.

Last year, we introduced a new tool in our evaluation – the Diagnostic – which seeks to pinpoint what specific aspects of project development are needed by each individual project, according to the stage they are at in our AHF Reuse Lifecycle (see bottom of page 6).

Through the Diagnostic, our team of Grant and Loan Officers assess every project at the start and end of their funding period against five key areas of competency: Governance of their organization; Capacity of their team; Ownership status of their building; Environmental sustainability plans; and Building needs. More information on the Diagnostic can be found in our Framework update.

During 2024/25, our team carried out 157 initial diagnostics. These showed that the average project already had in place what they needed for one of the five core areas at the start of their grant or loan period. By far the most common area where competence was already achieved was Governance – with 82% (128) of projects at all Lifecycle stages already having completed the governance work appropriate to their developmental phase.

The diagnostic also allows us to pinpoint more precisely where our funding and our advice and guidance will be directed.

Figure 4: AHF Reuse Lifecycle

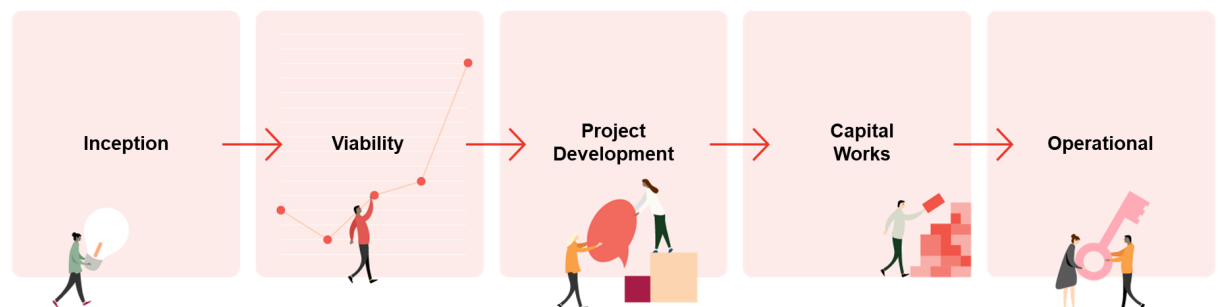
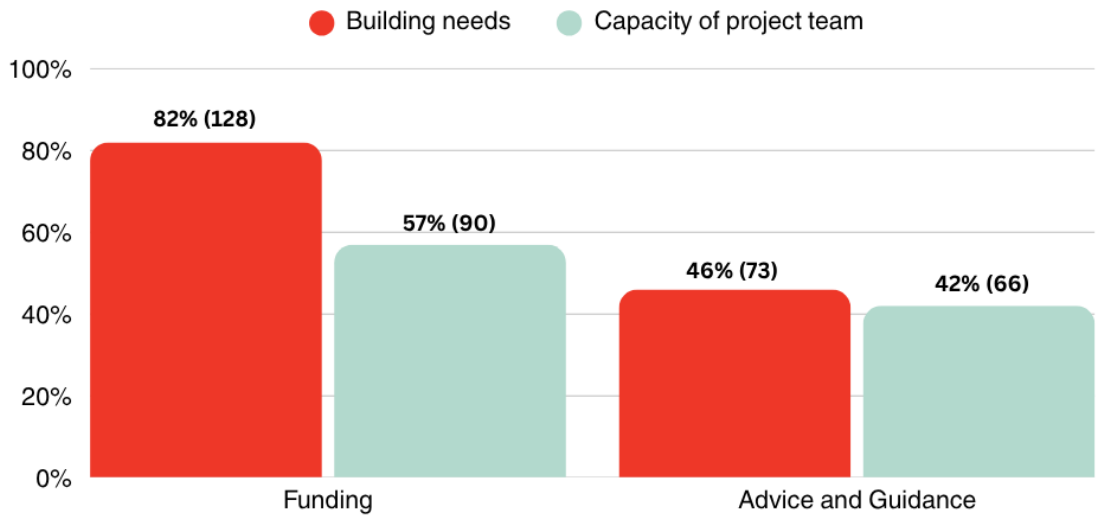



Figure 5: Bar chart showing the main areas where AHF Funding and Advice and Guidance is directed



Across all our activity, projects are looking to the AHF to help understand the condition and potential adaptability of their building and to equip their team for success.

Because community ownership of heritage is one of the AHF’s most important goals, we ask all projects at the end of their grant or loan period whether they own their buildings at that date: 61% (69) of Exit Survey respondents reported they owned or held a long lease (25+ years) on their building. According to our 2024/25 Longitudinal Survey, this figure rises to 72% five years after receiving funding and to 88% after ten years, demonstrating the **lasting value of our early support**.

88% 
of buildings AHF supports are in community ownership ten years after receiving funding.

We also want to know what role our funding and advice played in bringing buildings into community ownership. Of the projects that reported they owned or held a long lease on their building at Exit Survey stage, 59% (41) had already controlled their building before their AHF grant or loan, but **33% (23) reported that AHF funding and support directly enabled them to achieve ownership during their grant or loan period**. This means that one-in-five projects we supported were directly enabled to take ownership of their building thanks to our support during the period of their grant or loan.

1 in **5**

projects we supported last year were directly enabled by our support to take ownership of, or secure a long lease on their building during their grant or loan.

That's a

100%
increase



from **one-in-ten** projects reporting the same during our previous Strategic period.

A similar trend is apparent in our Longitudinal Survey. We asked organisations if the work funded by the AHF enabled them to take ownership of or secure a long lease on their buildings. Of projects that did not already have ownership/a long lease prior to their AHF grant or loan:

- ⇒ 18% of projects from ten years ago reported AHF support enabling them to take ownership.
- ⇒ **50% of projects funded five years ago reported AHF support enabled them to take ownership of their building post-award.**

Additionally, we ask projects completing grants or loans what other funding they have secured since they were awarded AHF funds: 58% (65) reported they had secured additional funding, demonstrating the **strong leveraging power of AHF grants and loans.**

The total figure levered into AHF projects during 2024/25 is

£29,070,144.



Right image: Tarlair Pool in Macduff, Aberdeenshire, which received an AHF grant in 2024/25. Credit - Friends of Tarlair Community Group.

Outcome 3

More resources available for community-led heritage regeneration

During the 2024/25 financial year, the **AHF administered seven grants and two loan programmes** across the four nations. Among these were the first grants dispersed through a significant new UK-wide funding partnership with The National Lottery Heritage Fund for Heritage Development Trusts for a £5 million, three-year programme. During this year, we also negotiated significantly enhanced partnerships in England, Scotland and Wales to commence in April 2025, which will provide substantially more grant funding plus more staff resource to guide and advise projects; we will provide more detail on these in next year's report.

Additionally, our Investment Team further developed their partnerships with Social Investment Business and Key Fund around the blended finance **Energy Resilience and Thrive Together Funds**. These lending partnership schemes resulted in £431,250 in four blended-finance awards brokered by the AHF team.

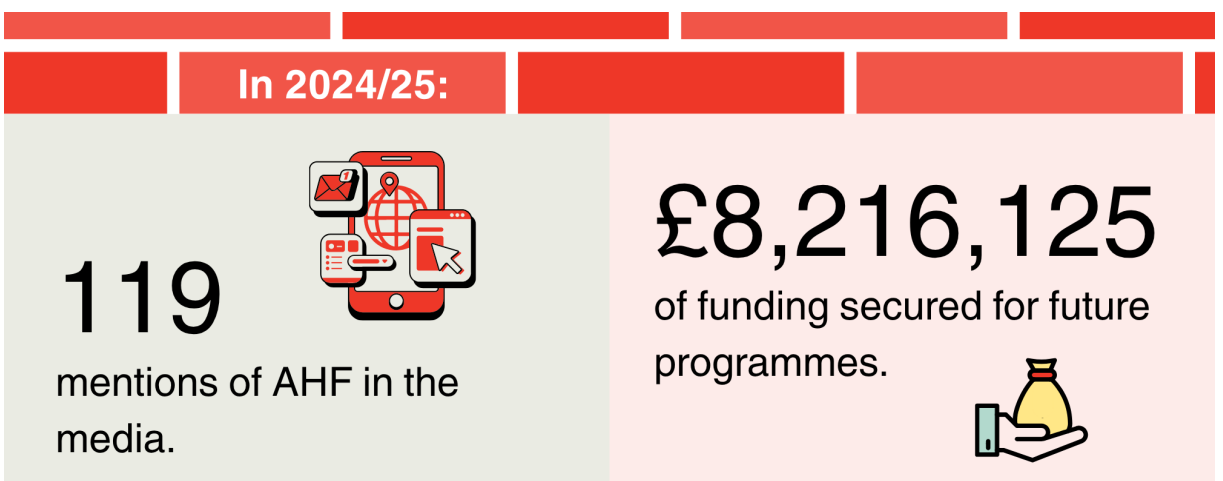
Our Programmes Team also partnered with Locality and other voluntary sector organisations on the **Community Ownership Fund Delivery Partnership**, supporting 43 applicants with guidance that helped secure nearly £6.5 million in grant funding towards heritage-regeneration projects across the UK.

As well as delivering our programmes and funds, and partnering with sector colleagues on innovative schemes, the AHF's small staff works to promote enabling conditions for community-led heritage regeneration. We therefore undertake policy work, advocacy and communications activity to support favourable policies and to argue for more investment, both for our own programmes and heritage-regeneration programmes led by others.

During 2024/25:

- ⇒ 17 of our staff of 22 directly engaged policymakers and other funders at 115 meetings.
- ⇒ **We delivered 38 presentations at conferences.**
- ⇒ **We served on 30 sector boards and committees.**
- ⇒ **We published 83 new case studies or news stories championing exemplar projects.**

Most commonly, the focus of our representation was around **the role heritage reuse can play in high street renewal and economic revitalisation**, and the benefits it can bring for social impact and community well-being.



Impact 1

Heritage buildings are being invested in, leading to sustainable use in places across the UK

One of our key goals is to support projects that may not proceed without AHF support, and for this reason we aim for half of projects we fund to be located in the top 30% most deprived communities as defined by the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Last year, 67 of the projects funded have been in the top 30% IMD, or 43% of projects funded.² This figure can be broken down to country-level: England 48%; Scotland 42%; Wales 29%; Northern Ireland 45%.

Unlike the previous year, therefore, last year we did not achieve our goal of half or more AHF projects being located in these most deprived communities. Part of the reason for this is an increase in applications from rural communities, which may acutely lack access to social and cultural infrastructure that historic buildings can help provide, but which may not otherwise be classed as deprived. We are closely monitoring our applications to check for barriers in being awarded funding and are redoubling efforts to proactively reach out to the most deprived communities across the UK in an effort to improve these figures next year.

In 2024/25 Exit Surveys, twelve projects reported completing their capital works, bringing back into community use 8,880m² of previously vacant or underused space. This figure makes an average of 740m² per project for projects completing last year. This figure is higher than the average floorspace per project reported through our Longitudinal survey, which last year provided an average project size of 408m² (this figure excludes Acton Old Library, which will bring an exceptionally large space back into use). These figures show the **enormous potential of heritage reuse for creating high-quality usable spaces** throughout the UK.



The Courtyard at the Buttermarket in Redruth, Cornwall, which was completed and re-opened in 2024/25.

Impact 2

Heritage buildings are restored and providing critical social infrastructure in communities across the UK

At the AHF, we aim to help groups not only conserve their heritage, but to put it into active use providing critical social and cultural infrastructure for communities. For this reason, we ask all projects completing a grant and loan whether their building is now in use. Sometimes, projects take a phased approach that allows them to open one part of a building while conservation works continue in another part; other groups prioritise ‘meanwhile uses’ to get people into buildings not-yet fully restored.

At the end of their grant or loan, 45% (50) buildings report being in active use, while 55% (62) buildings are not yet in active use. Our Longitudinal Survey across the first two years of our Strategy period shows more than eight-in-ten projects are in active use ten years after receiving our support, again underlining **the long-term resilience of projects benefiting from AHF funding and guidance.**

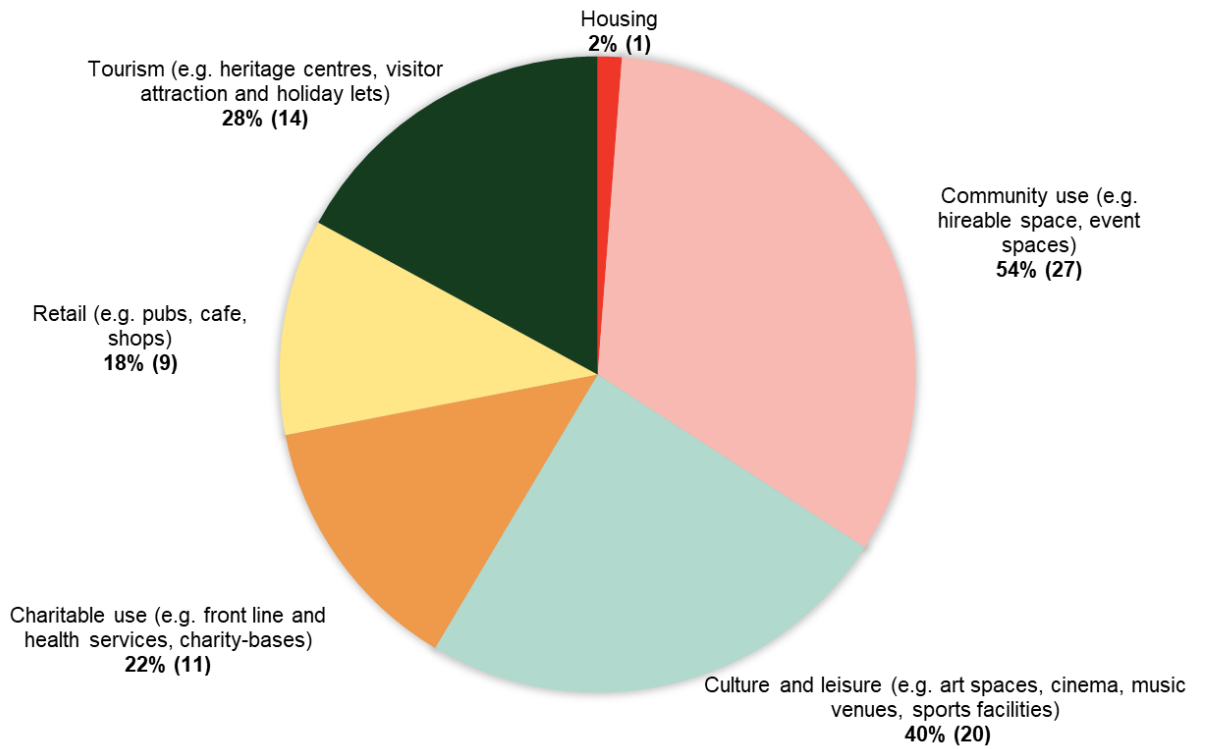


We also want to know what kinds of uses these buildings are being put towards, and how many different social enterprises and charities are using the buildings.

The 50 projects that reported in Exit Surveys that their buildings are in operational use have an average of 4 tenants per projects – these are long-term user/occupiers of the newly conserved space. They also report an average of 10 other groups (e.g. fitness clubs, scout troops, arts organisations) are using their space on an ongoing basis. This data clearly demonstrates how restored **historic buildings are serving as critical social and cultural infrastructure in communities across the UK.**

This conclusion is further demonstrated by the ways these buildings are being used. We asked buildings in active use to choose up to two primary uses of their building. More than half of projects described ‘Community Use’ as the main purpose of their building, with 40% also indicating ‘Culture or Leisure Use’.

Figure 6: Pie chart showing the different building uses



Community uses are also the most commonly reported end-use of projects responding to our Longitudinal Survey, followed by culture and leisure uses.

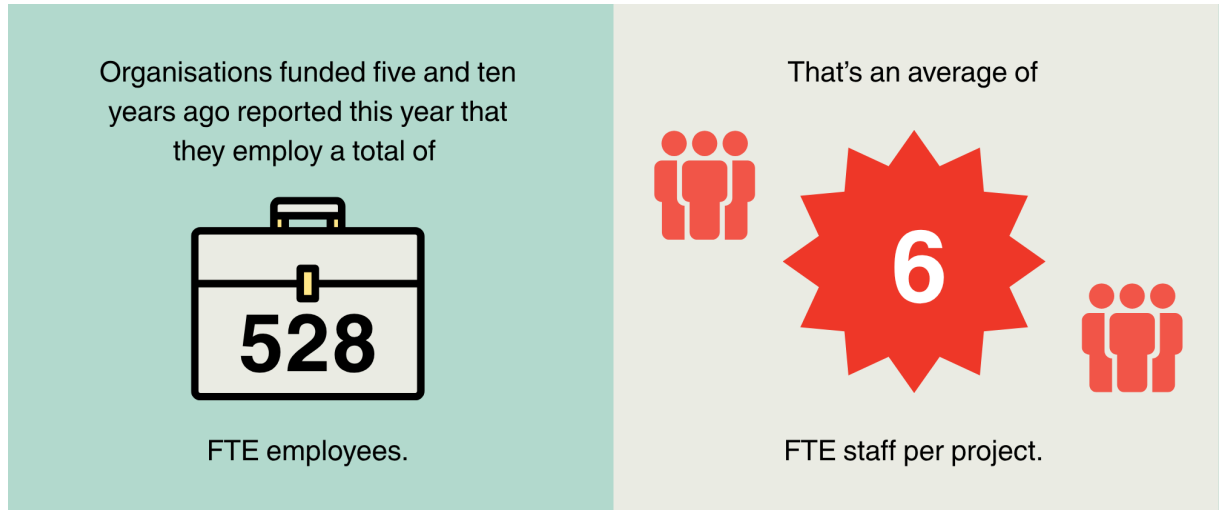


The School Room, part of Art Centre Penryn in Cornwall, England, which received an AHF loan during 2024/25. Credit - Art Centre Penryn.

Impact 3

Places benefit from economic and civic regeneration

In order to understand the economic and social impacts that heritage-regeneration projects can have within their communities, we ask projects how many jobs they have created – during their projects (at Exit Survey) and in their longer-term operation. During 2024/25, 31% (35) reported they had created 90 FTE jobs, or an average of 4 FTE jobs per project during their development and delivery. Our Longitudinal Survey also reports that **AHF projects go on to provide local jobs in the longer term.**



However, 11 responding projects were led by larger organisations employing 20 or more staff, and more common were the 33 projects that reported a total of 129 FTE roles, or just under 4 FTE staff supported by a more typical AHF project. **Heritage-regeneration projects are therefore consistent deliverers of local economic opportunities.**

A new question that we have started asking is around the use of apprenticeships to deliver projects. This past year, only 6% (7) reported training a total of 17 apprentices. Our Longitudinal Survey provides a similar figure for projects funded five or ten years previously: only 10% (9) projects surveyed reported training 16 apprentices. We are considering how we can increase the number of apprenticeships being delivered through our project support.

Spotlight on Volunteers

⇒ 61% (69) of projects completing last year reported a total of 1025 volunteers were involved for tens of thousands of volunteer hours, providing an overall average of 9 volunteers engaged per project.

That significant engagement with volunteers increases further once projects are fully developed or operational, according to our Longitudinal Survey:

⇒ 70% (66) reported a total of **3,447 volunteers engaged annually** across different activities associated with their project.

Ten projects reported engaging over 100 volunteers each year, but most projects reported engaging between 5-30 volunteers annually each five to ten years after receiving funding. Heritage-regeneration projects are thereby likely delivering long-term opportunities for local people to gain skills, benefit from spending time with others, and give back to their communities.

Conclusion

The second year of our Strategy period has been another year of transition for the AHF, as we embed the tools needed to gather the full dataset described in our Evaluation Framework. The data gathered demonstrates the **critical value of early-stage funding and guidance in supporting heritage buildings to develop into resilient community assets** and shows how, once developed, **these buildings can provide key social and cultural infrastructure** in communities across the UK.

We achieved most of our goals during the year, but did not quite achieve awarding 50% of our funding to projects in the top 30% most deprived parts of the UK, and we are redoubling efforts to ensure we meet this objective next year. In England, where we are delivering the Heritage Revival Fund, a new town centre programme, we have awarded near two-thirds of grants to projects in the top 30% most deprived communities, during the first quarter of the year. We look forward to reporting next year on the results of these efforts, as well as on the application of significant new funding streams for 2025/26 that our teams are currently focused on delivering.

Finally, our next report will cover the beginning of our 50th Anniversary activities, which will take place across the 2026 calendar year. We aim to celebrate many of the most exciting projects we have supported over 50 years, to showcase the extraordinary potential for heritage-led regeneration to transform places, and to inspire communities and funders to continue adapting and reusing historic buildings so they can enrich our collective future.



The new Visitor Centre at Kiplin Hall and Gardens, England, which received a Thrive Together Fund blended finance award brokered by the AHF during 2024/25.

Thank you to our team, our funders, and the hundreds of projects across the UK whose work is reported on here!



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Notes

¹ "Distinct projects" refers to individual building projects supported by the AHF. While some projects may receive more than one grant or loan, this figure represents the total number of unique projects funded between April 2023 and March 2025.

² Note on Deprivation Measures and Local Context: While this data provides a UK-wide picture of the proportion of awards made in the top 30% most deprived areas (as defined by national indices), it is important to recognise the significant variation in how deprivation is measured across the four nations. Each index (IMD, SIMD, WIMD, NIMDM) uses distinct methodologies, weightings, and indicators, reflecting different local priorities and conditions — including rurality, access to services, and regional economic factors such as GDP. As such, this is a broad, indicative measure and may not fully capture the nuanced local contexts in which our funded projects operate. In addition, many of the places we support may not rank highly in national deprivation indices but nonetheless face significant challenges — particularly in terms of access to essential services, community infrastructure, or cultural provision. These include rural and coastal areas, post-industrial towns, and other under-served communities where our projects continue to play a vital role.